7/1/87 R8780-1

PRRC emerging trends

Published by the Princeton Religion Research Center

Vol. 9, No. 6

June 87

Many Place Human Reason Ahead of God To Solve Life's Problems

PRINCETON, N.J. — Large numbers of Americans who belong to churches and attest to a belief in God depend on human reason and experience to resolve difficulties and shape values, according to a recent Gallup survey, conducted for the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Results of the survey with 511 telephone respondents, 18 years and older between May 19 and 21, indicate the degree to which faith in human resources is placed ahead of reliance on higher powers such as God in the lives of many Americans. Trust in human powers is seen by many observers as evidence of a growing secular trend even within the churches.

Asked whether they rely "more on yourself to solve the problems of life, or more on an outside power, such as God?," 45 percent chose "self" as an answer, compared to 36 percent who said, "outside power." Another 17 percent said they called upon both.

The greatest disparities appeared between college graduates and those who did not go beyond high school and evangelicals and non-evangelicals. Of those who completed college, 61 percent said they relied primarily on the "self," compared to 30 percent of those whose formal education ended with high school. By contrast, only 22 percent of the college graduates staked their faith in an "outside power" to solve problems, compared to 49 percent of the high school graduates.

Evangelicals, at 56 percent, were the most likely to choose a higher power while 59 percent of non-evangelicals said they depend on the self.

Religious Values Versus Reason

Another question asked whether "traditional religious values" or "man's reason and intellect" was more responsible for "the advancement of mankind." Nearly half, 49 percent, chose reason and intellect, 40 percent credited religious values and seven percent said "both."

Those attributing progress most to reason and intellect were young people from 18 to 29 (58 percent), college graduates (61 percent) and non-evangelicals (56 percent). Most credit to religious values was given by high school graduates (47 percent) and evangelicals (56 percent).

Responses split evenly on the issue of whether morals and ethics should be based more on "religious values" or "human experiences over the centuries." A preference for experience was shown by 44 percent and for religious values by 43 percent.

Evangelicals (56 percent), were far more likely than non-evangelicals (34 percent), to look to religious values to form morals and ethics. Conversely, 48 percent of the non-evangelicals favored human experience compared to 35 percent of the evangelicals.

Latest survey information shows that 69 percent of Americans belong to churches and 94 percent believe in God. Moreover, 90 percent say they pray to God. What is not so clear is the relationship between beliefs and practices such as prayer and the process of solving life crises. Some analysts see reliance on human capabilities as trust in resources created by God to handle the task. Others assert that trust in human powers stands in contradiction to professions of faith because reliance on the self cannot be reconciled with dependence on God.

The dilemma is clearly suggested in these survey findings. Belief in God and religion remains strong among many Americans, but many others appear to have sought non-traditionally religious ways of approaching their difficulties and informing their morality.

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Steady Increase Noted In Percent of Volunteers in U.S.

Despite the high mobility of families in the U.S., the growth of women in the work force, and charges that Americans are increasingly preoccupied with their material well-being, volunteerism continues to grow in this nation.

As many as four in 10 (39%) adult citizens in the latest survey report being involved, formally or informally, in such charitable activities as helping the underprivileged, the infirm or elderly. The current figure represents the high point in a 10-year trend, with 27% in the first survey in 1977 reporting such charitable work.

The proportion of both male and female volunteers has grown over the last decade, but the gain has been more pronounced among men — up 18 points compared to 7 points for women.

An American Trait?

Volunteerism is considered an American trait, and levels of such activity tend to run higher here than in other nations. As a case in point, a 1986 British Gallup Poll showed 24% of British citizens engaged in charitable activities such as those covered in the U.S. Gallup survey.

Following is the question and national trend:

Do you, yourself, happen to be involved in any charity or social service activities, such as helping the poor, the sick or the elderly?

Charitable Activities
(Percent saying yes)

1987	39%
1986	36
1984	31
1982	29
1977	27

The following table shows the changes between 1977 and 1987 by men and women:

Charitable Activities
(Percent saying yes)

	1987 %	1977 %	Point change
NATIONAL	39	27	+12
Men	42	24	+18
Women	36	29	+ 7

The latest results are based on telephone interviews with 503 adults, 18 and older, conducted in scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period May 4-10. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects should not exceed 5 percentage points in either direction.

In addition to sampling error, the reader should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. *These statements conform to the standards of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

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Following are the questions and national findings:

Do you rely more on yourself to solve the problems of life, or more on an outside power, such as God?

More on self	45%
Outside power	36
Both (Volunteered)	17
No opinion	2
	100%

Should morality and ethics be based more on traditional religious values, or more on man's experience over the centuries?

Traditional religious values	43%
Man's experience over the centuries	4
Both (Volunteered)	9
No opinion	4
	100%

In your opinion, which is more responsible for the advancement of mankind — traditional religious values, or man's reason and intellect, based on his learning experience?

Traditional religious values	40%
Man's reason and intellect	49
Both (volunteered)	7
No opinion	4
	100%

By Kenneth A. Briggs

Correction

Due to a typographical error, a headline in the April issue of *Emerging Trends* falsely characterized the contents of the article. The headline should have read,

"Acceptance of Homosexuals in Clergy Grows."

Half of British Public Report Extraordinary Spiritual Experiences

By Kenneth A. Briggs

Half of the British people have had experiences of spirits or forces beyond themselves, though many do not describe these incidents as religious.

The findings come from a Gallup Omnibus Survey of Britons and were correlated with previous results from the pioneering studies of spiritual experience by the Alister Hardy Research Center at Manchester College, Oxford.

The Hardy research has identified basic categories of extraordinary life experiences used in the Gallup survey: patterning of events, awareness of the presence of God, awareness of receiving help in answer to prayer, awareness of a guiding presence not called God, awareness of the presence of the dead, awareness of a sacred presence in nature, awareness of an evil presence and experiencing that all things are "One."

Forty-eight percent of the British reported one kind of experience or another. Leading the list with 29 percent was the experience called "patterning" whereby people feel that a series of events is linked together in meaningful sequence by a force beyond. "Awareness of God's presence" followed with 27 percent, receiving answers to prayer was next with 25 percent, and "awareness of a guiding presence not called God" was right behind with 22 percent.

Eighteen percent said they had experienced "the dead," 16 percent said they found a sacred quality in nature, 12 percent reported an "evil presence" at one time or other, and the smallest number, five percent, testified to having a mystical experience of "Oneness."

As would be expected, those who saw their experiences as "religious" were much more likely to report having experienced the presence of God, help in prayer, sacredness in nature, a kindly spiritual guide, and moments of Oneness than those who saw their experiences as non-religious.

For the "religious" respondents, the "patterning" experience was the least common, while for the "non-religious" it was the most common.

The preponderance of Britons say they have had these experiences in solitude rather than in a group setting. The range of aloneness ranged from 61 percent for those who had been aware of an evil presence to a high of 76 percent who said they had received help from prayer. Though church is the traditional worship setting in the churches, by far the majority of people say they have spiritual or transcendental experiences by themselves.

Likewise, many people had been reluctant to tell others about their experiences. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, those reporting an evil presence and awareness of the dead had been somewhat more willing to share the experience with others than those reporting a sacred presence in nature, receiving help from prayer or experience of Oneness.

Americans Donated Record Amount to Religion in 1986

(From GIVING USA, 1986, a publication of the AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy)

In 1986, Americans donated a record $40.90 billion to religious organizations and agencies, an increase of 9.2 percent from the revised total of $37.46 billion given a year earlier.

The AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, which measures contributions to the nation's gift-supported institutions each year, revised the total for giving to religion for 1985 because of the availability of later data.

Last year contributions to the religious category of philanthropy constituted 46.9 percent of all giving during the year as compared to 47 percent in 1985.

Giving to religion, the Trust said, has been nearly half of total philanthropy every year and varies by only a few points up or down, depending for the most part on the volume and value of large gifts and bequests to other philanthropic categories, such as education, health and culture.

The AAFRC Trust's estimate for total giving to religion is based on reports it receives from religious organizations. Those organizations are asked how much contributions were up or down in the previous year. The data are then weighted and averaged to arrive at an overall percentage change from the previous year.

Because some organizations are as much as a year behind in releasing their financial data, it becomes necessary to revise the figures when the later data show the original estimate was either too low or too high. The estimate for 1985 was revised downward from $37.73 to $37.46 billion.

Selected U.S. Church Bodies

Among the nine selected U.S. church bodies, compiled from information collected on 39 U.S. church bodies, membership showed a decline of 0.84 while giving increased 7.08 percent, well above the inflation rate of 3.8 percent in 1985. Total confirmed membership in the group of nine was 24 million, down from 24.4 million a year earlier.

The nine U.S. church bodies (American Baptist Churches, American Lutheran Churches, Christian Church, Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church) reported an average per capita giving of $316.86 compared to $293.65 in the previous year, an increase of 7.9 percent. Contributions to these churches totaled $7.6 billion in 1985, compared to $7.1 billion in 1984, an increase of 7.08 percent.

Full-time membership declined in each of the church groups, from minus 0.18 percent for the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod to minus 4.10 percent for Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The Episcopal Church compiled the top figure in per capita giving in the full membership category (those with full, communicant or confirmed status). The dollar amount rose to $554.55, an increase of almost 11 percent from a year earlier.

Total contributions in this group showed that every church body registered increases, and in every case the percent increase exceeded the inflation rate.

Profile of Religious Organizations

In the *Dimensions of the Independent Sector: A Statistical Profile*, published by INDEPENDENT SECTOR, it was estimated that in 1983 there were 338,000 religious organizations. Their current operating expenditure rose 67 percent from 1977 to 1982, less than 7 percent in 1983 and showed no increase for 1984.

While wages and salaries stayed at approximately 43 percent of current operating expenditures during this period, relative wages increased from 71 to 83 percent of the average wages for the independent sector. This increase in wages was partially due to a decline of 7 percent in total employees.

Volunteer time is extremely important to religious organizations. The estimated 39.5 million Americans who reported contributing volunteer time in the 1985 Gallup survey represented the full-time volunteer equivalent of 2.2 million employees, which is more than three times the total paid employment in religious institutions. The estimated value of this time is $35 billion, which was twice the current operating expenditures for religious organizations in 1984.

Giving to Religion

	Amount (Billions)
1970	$ 9.34
1971	10.07
1972	10.19
1973	10.53
1974	11.84
1975	12.81
1976	14.18
1977	16.98
1978	18.35
1979	20.17
1980	20.23
1981	25.05
1982	28.06
1983	31.61
1984	35.43
1985	37.46
1986	40.90

Drug Abuse Continues to Decline Among Teens

Teens are taking an increasingly hard line against substance abuse and have cut down on their use of marijuana, according to the results of the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

Nearly nine teens in 10 (88 percent) now oppose the legalization of marijuana and three in four (76 percent) oppose decriminalization of possession of small amounts of the substance. As recently as 1979, there was majority support for decriminalizing marijuana possession, with only 44 percent of teens opposing the suggestion. Opposition to legalization in 1979 came from only 65 percent of the teens.

The number of teens who say they have tried marijuana has also declined during the period, from 41 percent in 1979 to only 16 percent in 1987. In 1979, one teen in four (27 percent) said they had used marijuana during the month preceding the interview, while in 1987, only one teen in 20 (5 percent) reports such use.

Crack and cocaine abuse are serious problems in some locales, but nationally speaking, few teens have tried the substances. Only 2 percent say they have ever tried cocaine, and 1 percent admit to having tried crack. Those who have experimented with crack or cocaine usually have been the same people who have tried marijuana, so that the net proportion of teen drug experimenters and abusers is 16 percent.

The principal decline in marijuana use comes from younger teens (13 to 15 years old), among whom only 9 percent have tried marijuana and still fewer, 2 percent, report use in the past month. Among teens 16 and older, reports of ever using marijuana rise to 26 percent, and use in the past month to 10 percent.

Younger teens also take a harder line against marijuana, with 90 percent opposing its legalization and 81 percent against its decriminalization. Among older teens, opposition to legalization drops to 85 percent, while opposition to decriminalization drops to 69 percent.

Above-average students (13 percent) are less likely than those who are doing average or below-average work in school (20 percent) to report experimenting with marijuana.

Regionally, the proportion of teens who admit to having ever tried marijuana is highest in the West (21 percent). Comparatively less experimentation is noted in the East (16 percent), South (15 percent), and Midwest (12 percent). Recent use of marijuana, however, is about the same for all regions.

Here is how the questions were asked:

Have you ever tried marijuana, cocaine, or crack?

If so, about how long ago did you last try it?

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?

Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?

The findings reported here are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 503 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted in the period of March 20-30, 1987.

Marijuana User Profiles

	Ever used	Used past month	Oppose legalization	Oppose decriminalization
NATIONAL	16%	5%	88%	76%
Male	18	7	86	71
Female	14	4	89	82
Ages 13 to 15	9	2	90	81
Ages 16 to 17	26	10	85	69
Above-average students	13	4	89	80
Average and below	20	7	86	71
White-collar background	16	5	89	78
Blue-collar background	16	5	86	75
East	16	6	84	75
Midwest	12	4	88	77
South	15	6	91	82
West	21	6	86	68
Central cities	18	5	88	77
Suburbs	17	7	87	71
Non-metropolitan areas	14	4	88	80

PRAYER IN ACTION
A Growth Experience

by Miriam Murphy, S.N.D., Ph.D.
with a Preface by George Gallup, Jr.

At a time when survey research indicates that the Number One religious trend in America today is a quest for depth and a desire for spiritual growth . . . this book fills a great need.

Highly recommended by leading religious periodicals, it helps you to better understand the essence of the inner life as growth in a relational love-faith with power to live, give, and forgive. Progress in integration and wholeness through Christian prayer is seen against the backdrop of Eastern meditation and popular theory.

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This book, now available through the Princeton Religion Research Center, is inspirational, informational, and functional. A Study Guide is available which has been used with the book successfully for workshops, retreats, and study groups. The author, Dr. Miriam Murphy, is a Sister of Notre Dame who has used the contents of this book extensively at seminars at the Center of Continuing Education, Princeton Theological Seminary, and for workshops and retreats. She is cofounder of the Princeton Religion Research Center.

Order direct from the Princeton Religion Research Center, P.O. Box 628, Princeton, New Jersey 08542. $7.95 per copy. Study Guide: $5.00 per copy. Study Guide is free with an order of ten copies of Prayer in Action.

EMERGING TRENDS is published monthly except July and August by the PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER. The Center, founded in 1977, is an inter-faith non-denominational research organization with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. The PRRC specializes in creative, actionable research, utilizing the worldwide attitudinal and behavioral facilities of Gallup International. The purpose of the PRRC is to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the U.S. and abroad and to explore ways this information can enable religious leaders to promote spiritual growth. A one-year subscription can be obtained for $30.00. Inquire: **Publications Department, P.O. Box 310, 53 Bank Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08542 (Telephone 609/924-9600). PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS CHANGE.**

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